Expectations and Experience: the world of the medieval and Renaissance traveller

PAM GRAVESTOCK

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EXPECTATIONS AND EXPERIENCE: THE WORLD OF THE MEDIEVAL AND RENAISSANCE TRAVELLER

When setting out on a journey today, a modern traveller might consult a guide book such as the *Lonely Planet*, *Frommer's* or the *Let's Go* series. These concise works focus on locations from around the world, identifying and describing, in a rather cursory manner, sites of interest. Travellers look to these works to plan their vacations and establish their routes. But what did medieval and Renaissance travellers rely upon for information about the world around them? The source for such information was rich and varied: those setting out on pilgrimages might rely on guides which outlined the major routes to Rome, Jerusalem or Santiago de Compostela, while missionaries and merchants might look to the itineraries and writings of those who had charted the course before them. Additionally, geographical and historical texts, encyclopedias, maps, and wonder books added to the wide array of sources that travellers (real or armchair) might consult. The experience of travel was conditioned by the expectations which were garnered from these works. The authority with which many of these sources were imbued led many travellers to accept these writings as truth - even though the reality of what they encountered was often quite different.

THE CLASSICAL INHERITANCE: THEORY AND APPLICATION

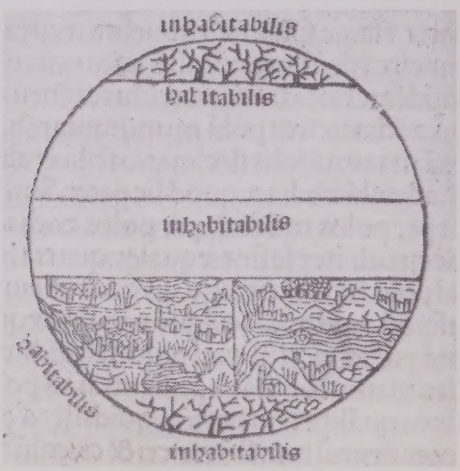
Following their classical predecessors, medieval and Renaissance geographers and historians divided up the world using two basic models: the northern-oriented maps showing the climatic zones of the world, and the eastern-oriented maps showing the three known continents of Europe, Asia and Africa. The latter, known as T-O maps, presented the world as a sphere divided into three parts, with Asia equal in size to Europe and Africa combined. Basic geographical theory was drawn primarily from ancient Greek sources, including the notion of a spherical earth and the concept of the *oikoumene*, referring to the inhabited lands - Europe, Asia and Africa. Since the Greek language was virtually unknown in the West from the fifth century, four fundamental classical Latin works served to transmit the bulk of geographical knowledge to the medieval and Renaissance era - Pliny's *Natural History* (ca.77), Gaius Julius Solinus' (ca. 230/240) *Collectanea rerum memorabilium*, Macrobius' *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio* (ca.400), and Orosius' *Seven Books of History against the Pagans* (completed 418).

WORLD MAP FROM MACROBIUS (Ambrosius Aurelius Theodosius Macrobius, A.D. 399-422), *In Somnium Scipionis expositio*, Apud Sanctam Coloniam: Apud Eucharium Cervicorum, 1521 (cover image)

This sixteenth-century reproduction of a late antique conception of the world is taken from an edition of Macrobius' *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio* (*In Somnium Scipionis expositio*, ca. 400). The *Commentary* provides some geographical information and incorporates maps and diagrams from another of Macrobius' works, the *Saturnalia*, which

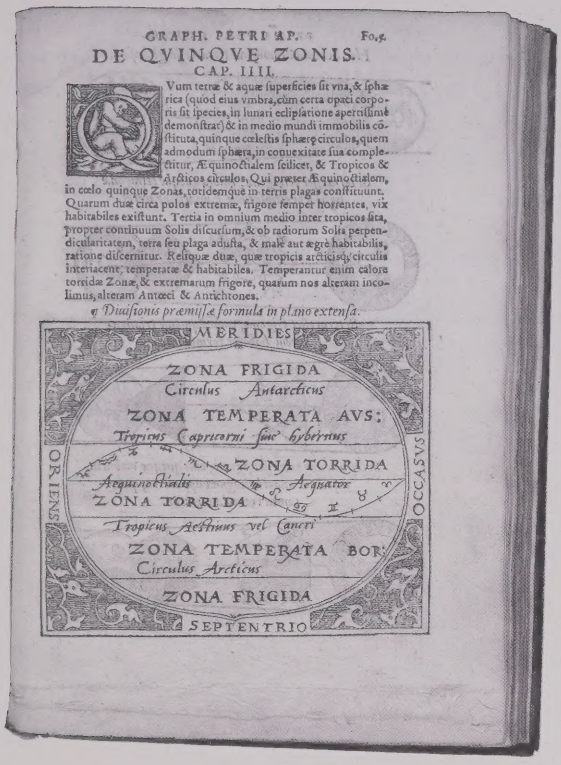
addresses more fully astronomical and geographical theory - discussing the earth's size, circumference, and climatic zones. The *Commentary*, published in over 200 manuscript copies before 1500, was widely consulted throughout the Middle Ages, becoming one of the primary western sources for geographical knowledge. Its numerous diagrams and maps influenced many later works produced through to the fifteenth century, including that of Lambert de St. Omer in his *Liber Floridus* (ca. 1120), Sacrobosco's (also known as John of Holywood) *Sphaera Mundi* (ca.1220), and Peter Apian's *Cosmographia* (1564, see below).

It is Macrobius' zonal maps that had the most lasting impact: an example of one is presented here. This map depicts the traditional tripartite division of the world, indicating the three known continents - Africa, Europe and India (to represent Asia). This version also indicates the division of habitable and unhabitable zones developed by Macrobius. His extremely influential zonal maps divide the earth into five zones (or climates): two frigid and unhabitable polar zones, an uncrossable equatorial zone, and two habitable temperate zones.



ZONE MAP FROM JOANNES DE SACROBOSCO (ca. 1190-1258), *Sphaera mundi*, Venice: Octavianus Scotus, 1490

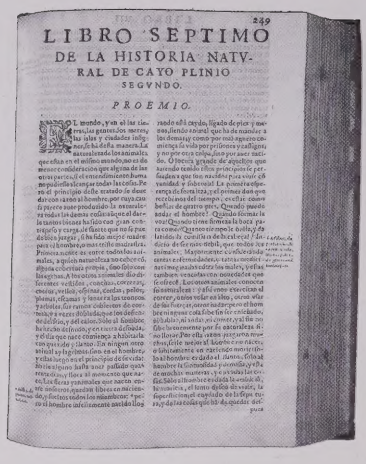
Each of these images, depicting the world as a series of habitable and unhabitable zones, illustrates the continuing impact that Macrobius had on geographical theory. Sacrobosco's popular and highly influential work (c. 1220) circulated in hundreds of manuscript copies. It became a compulsory textbook in many European universities from the mid-fourteenth century, remaining in use until 1700. Drawing on Greek sources, it instructed the reader on astronomical and geographical methods. Apian's *Cosmographia*, first published in 1524, focuses on geographical conceptions of Europe, Asia, Africa and now America. In addition to zonal maps, Apian's work also features a number of astronomical diagrams and various maps of the world.


GRAPH. PETRI AP. Fo.5.
DE QVINQVE ZONIS.
CAP. IIII.
Vum terræ & aquæ superficies sit vna, & sphærica (quod eius vmbra, cùm certa opaci corporis sit species, in lunari eclipsatione apertissimè demonstrat) & in medio mundi immobilis cõstituta, quinque cœlestis sphæræ circulos, quem admodum sphæra, in connexitate sua complectitur, Æquinoctialem scilicet, & Tropicos & Arcticos circulos. Qui præter Æquinoctialem, in cœlo quinque Zonas, totidemque in terris plagas constituunt. Quarum duæ circa polos extremæ, frigore semper horrentes, vix habitabiles existunt. Tertia in omnium medio inter tropicos sita, propter continuum Solis discursum, & ob radiorum Solis perpendicularitatem, terra seu plaga adusta, & malè aut ægrè habitabilis, ratione discernitur. Reliquæ duæ, quæ tropicis arcticisq; circulis interiacent, temperatæ & habitabiles. Temperantur enim calore torridæ Zonæ, & extremarum frigore, quarum nos alteram incolimus, alteram Antœci & Antichtones.
¶ Diuisionis præmissæ formula in plano extensa.
MERIDIES
ZONA FRIGIDA
Circulus Antarcticus
ZONA TEMPERATA AVS:
Tropicus Capricorni seu Hybernus
ZONA TORRIDA
Æquinoctialis
Æquator
ZONA TORRIDA
Tropicus Æstiuus vel Cancri
ZONA TEMPERATA BOR:
Circulus Arcticus
ZONA FRIGIDA
SEPTENTRIO
ORIENS
OCCASVS

ZONE MAP FROM PETER APIAN (1495-1552), *Cosmographia*, Antwerp: Arnoldi Birckmanni, 1564

OPENING TO BOOK VII FROM PLINY THE ELDER (23-79 A.D.), *Historia natural*, Madrid: L. Sanchez, 1624-29

Pliny's encyclopedic work, *Historia natural* (A.D.77), covers the fields of physical geography, cosmology, astronomy, zoology, botany, medicine, anthropology and history. His work is a compilation, based not on personal observation, but on a large body of earlier Greek works, including Homer, Ctesias, Megasthenes and tales relating to Alexander the Great. The opening page to *Book VII* from the section on Zoology, is displayed here, taken from a seventeenth-century Spanish edition of this work. This section focuses on human beings from diverse cultures and includes a lengthy discussion of the marvelous races. Pliny provides a description of the customs, physical and social character, and the location of these various populations. His discussion of the world's monsters and natural marvels captured the European imagination for over 1500 years. Numerous maps and travel literature produced throughout the Middle Ages refer to and quote from Pliny's account. In this chapter, Pliny describes - to the amazement of his readers - curious races that inhabit the eastern regions of the earth, primarily India and Ethiopia. Among these peoples are the Blemmyae, the Cynocephali, and the Sciopods, to name only a few.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LIBRO SEPTIMO
DE LA HISTORIA NATV-
RAL DE CAYO PLINIO
SEGVNDO.
PROEMIO.

GAIUS JULIUS SOLINUS (ca. 230/240 A.D.), *Delle cose maravigliose del mondo*, Vinegia: G. Giolito de' Ferrari, 1557

Very little is known about Solinus' personal history but he left behind an extremely influential work entitled *Collectanea rerum memorabilium* (*Collection of Memorable Things*) that survives in at least 350 manuscript copies. On exhibit here is a sixteenth-century Italian edition of this work. This geography-focused compilation is essentially a digest of Pliny's *Natural History*, in that it provides readers with a rich compendium of the known world's miraculous and extraordinary phenomena, its marvels and fables, including the names of some 1900 people and places, both historical and mythical. Solinus begins with a discussion of the various parts of the known world and, following Pliny, gives an account of the monstrous races believed to inhabit the Far East. Solinus' work became the source for numerous other geographical and historical compilers throughout late antiquity and the Middle Ages, among them, St. Augustine, Martianus Capella, and Isidore of Seville. In addition, various medieval maps (including the Hereford mappamundi) quoted from Solinus' writings.

HEREFORD MAPPAMUNDI, ca.1285 (seen here in reproduction, original located in Hereford Cathedral, Hereford, England)

Dramatically different from the Macrobian zone maps, this large-scale map of the world, or "*mappamundi*," measures 64 x 54 inches. Seen here in a contemporary reproduction, the Hereford mappamundi reflects the traditional tripartite division of the world but elaborates on it significantly. A cosmologically-focused work, the Hereford map combines geographical, historical, biblical, mythological, political and anthropological interests. Encyclopedic in nature and incorporating over 500 images, it draws upon a number of classical and early medieval works, including Macrobius, Solinus, Strabo, Ctesias, Isidore of Seville and Pliny the Elder.

In structure, the Hereford map mirrors the T-O map, a common format that depicts the earth as a sphere divided into three continents, with Asia equal in size to Europe

and Africa combined. Here, following this tradition, Europe is located in the lower left, with Africa to its right and Asia at the top. (Interestingly, however, the map's rubricator has mislabelled the continents, inverting the labels for Europe and Africa.) Unlike modern maps, these maps are oriented toward the East, land of mankind's birth in Eden and redemption in Jerusalem. It is here, on the Hereford map, that Christ sits in majesty.

The exact identity of the map's author has been debated by scholars for a number of years, although it is commonly attributed to Richard of Haldingham. Scholars have also debated the manner in which this map may have been used by its contemporaries. It may have functioned as a teaching aid for cathedral clerics, or perhaps served as an altarpiece or devotional aid. Whatever its original function, it is certain that it was not intended to be used in the manner we use contemporary maps. Its purpose was not to show the reader how to get from one point to another, but to convey a symbolic image of the world and the relationship of its parts.

WORLD MAP FROM PTOLEMY (ca.100-180), *Cosmographia*, Rome: Petrus de Turre, 1490

Ptolemy, an astronomer, astrologer and geographer from Alexandria, produced a number of very influential works, among them the *Almagest*, a series of thirteen books treating the cosmos, for which he was well known throughout the Middle Ages. His *Cosmographia* (also known as the *Geographia*), however, was unknown in the West from the second century through to the fifteenth. In 1474, the first printed text of Ptolemy's *Cosmographia* was made available in Europe, and several years later, in 1477, the first edition with maps was published in Bologna. The world map shown is from a late fifteenth-century edition published in Rome and depicts the three known continents and indicates the various climate zones.

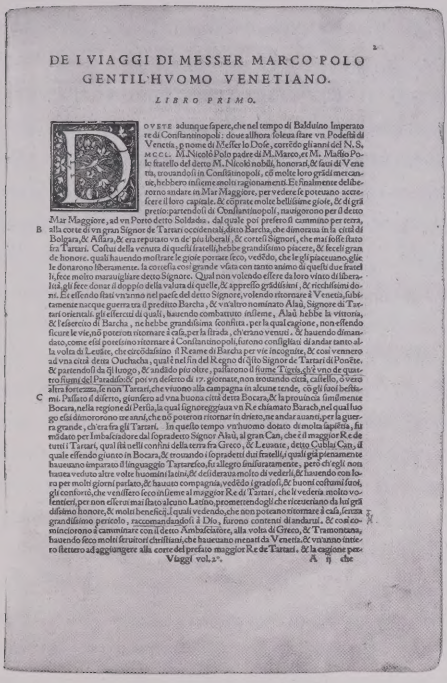
In his works, Ptolemy aimed to focus, criticize and synthesize the geographical thought of classical Greece. He did this by addressing the size and location of the inhabited world (the *oikoumene*), locating and naming over 8000 specific places with coordinates on a world map, and also by developing a mathematical construction of the cosmos. When his works were recovered in the West in the late fifteenth century, none of Ptolemy's maps survived and had to be reconstructed from his writings.
(on loan from a private collection)

TABULA SCRIPTA: THE EAST

> *"At the farthest reaches of the world often occur new marvels and wonders, as though nature plays with greater freedom secretly at the edges of the work than she does openly and nearer us in the middle of it."* From the *Polychronicon*, a world history compiled by Ranulph Higden (d. 1364)

Since the classical era and beyond the discovery of the New World, the diversity of the East captured the attention and fascinated both European travellers and audiences at home. The East, a term used to generically refer to India, Ethiopia and Asia - was essentially Elsewhere to medieval and Renaissance Europeans. It was an enticing land that was frequently understood in terms of its differences: its exotic peoples and rare commodities (gems and spices), its foreign customs and religious beliefs. Distant from the Western centre both spatially and culturally, it was also believed to be the locale for a number of important Christian sites, among them the kingdom of Prester John. This land of wealth and riches within Muslim-held territory was purportedly ruled by a Christian king. A letter describing this kingdom began to circulate widely in the mid-twelfth century and the possibility of locating this unique location inspired explorers for over four hundred years (among them Marco Polo, Sir John Mandeville, William of Rubruck and Odoric of Pordenone). Additionally, it was also believed that the terrestrial Paradise, and the source of the four major rivers, the Nile, Tigris, Euphrates and Ganges, was located in the extreme eastern regions of the world (on the Hereford map it is situated on an island at the easternmost edge of Asia). Many travellers make mention of Paradise; for example, Sir John Mandeville informs his readers that the Fountain of Youth could be found here, but notes that he himself was unable to visit this holy site because he was unworthy.

Although European travellers often found their access to the East restricted, tales of the marvels and riches to be found here continued to fuel the European imagination. Between the late fourth century and the early fifteenth century, a large body of travel literature focusing on this corner of the world was produced, taking the form of pilgrimage accounts, guide books, chronicles, wonder books, letters, and missionary and merchant accounts. Perhaps the most famous and enduring accounts from the late medieval period were those produced by Sir John Mandeville and Marco Polo (1254-1324), which helped to shape the European image of the East.



DE I VIAGGI DI MESSER MARCO POLO GENTIL'HVOMO VENETIANO.

LIBRO PRIMO.

DOVETE adunque sapere, che nel tempo di Balduino Imperato re di Constantinopoli: doue allhora soleua stare vn Podestà di Venetia, o nome di Meser lo Dose, corrido gliani del N.S. MCCL. M.Nicolò Polo padre di M.Marco, et M. Matfio Polo fratello del detto M. Nicolò nobili, honorati, & sauj di Venetia, trouandoli in Constantinopoli, cõ molte loro grãdi mercantie, hebbero insieme molti ragionamenti. Et finalmente deliberorno andare in Mar Maggiore, per vedere le poteuano accrescere il loro capitale. & cõprate molte bellissime gioie, & di grã pretio partendoli di Constantinopoli, nauigorono per il detto Mar Maggiore, ad vn Porto detto Soldaida. dal quale poi prefero il cammino per terra, alla corte di vn gran Signor de Tartari occidentali, detto Barcha, che dimorana in la città di Bolgara, & Assara, & era reputato vn de piu liberali, & cortesi Signori, che mai fosse stato fra Tartari. Costui della venuta di questi fratelli, hebbe grandissimo piacere, & fece gran de honore. quali hauendo mostrate le gioie portate seco, vedẽdo, che le gli piaceuano, glie le donarono liberamente. la cortesia cosi grande vsata con tanto animo di questi due fratelli, fece molto marauigliare detto Signore. Qual non volendo essere da loro vinto di liberalità, gli fece donar il doppio della valuta di quelle, & appresso grãdissimi, & ricchissimi doni. Et essendo stati vn'anno nel paese del detto Signore, volendo ritornare à Venetia, subitamente nacque guerra tra il predetto Barcha, & vn'altro nominato Alaù, Signore di Tartari orientali. gli eserciti di quali, hauendo combattuto insieme, Alaù hebbe la vittoria, & l'esercito di Barcha, ne hebbe grandissima sconfitta. per la qual cagione, non essendo sicure le vie, nõ poteron ritornare à casa. per la strada, ch'erano venuti. & hauendo dimandato, come essi poteßino ritornare à Constantinopoli, furono consigliati di andar tanto alla volta di Leuãte, che circõdaßino il Reame di Barcha per vie incognite, & cosi vennero ad vna città detta Ouchucha, qual è nel fin del Regno di detto Signor de Tartari di Ponente. & partendoßi da di luogo, & andado piu oltre, passarono il fiume Tigris, ch'è vno de quattro fiumi del Paradiso. & poi vn deserto di 17. giornate, non trouando città, castello, ò vero altra fortezza, se non Tartari, che viuono alla campagna in alcune tende, cõ gli suoi bestiami. Passato il diserto, giunsero ad vna buona città detta Bocara, & la prouincia similmente Bocara, nella regione di Persia, la qual signoreggiaua vn Re chiamato Barach, nel qual luogo essi dimororono tre anni, che nõ poteron ritornar in drieto, ne andar auanti, per la guerra grande, ch'era fra gli Tartari. In questo tempo vn'huomo dotato di molta sapiẽtia, fu mãdato per Ambasciatore dal sopradetto Signor Alaù, al gran Can, che è il maggior Re de tutti i Tartari, qual ità nelli confini della terra fra Greco, & Leuante, detto Cublai Can, il quale essendo giunto in Bocara, & trouando i sopradetti dui fratelli, i quali già pienamente hauessuno imparato il linguaggio Tartaresco, fu allegro similmente, però ch'egli non hauea veduto altre volte huomini latini, & desideraua molto di vederli, & hauendo con loro per molti giorni parlato, & hauuto compagnia, vedẽdo i gravissimi, & buoni costumi loro, gli confortò, che venißero seco insieme al maggior Re di Tartari, che li vederia molto volentieri, per non esser mai stato alcuno Latino, promettendogli che riceueriano da lui grãdissimo honore, & molti beneficij, i quali vedendo, che non poteano ritornare à casa, senza grandissimo pericolo, raccomandandoßi à Dio, furono contenti di andarui, & cosi cominciorono à camminare con il detto Ambasciatore, alla volta di Greco, & Tramontana, hauendo seco molti seruitori christiani, che haueuano menati da Venetia, & vn'anno intiero fecero à aggiungere alla corte del prefato maggior Re de Tartari. & la cagione per-

OPENING TO MARCO POLO'S *Travels* from Giovanni Battista Ramusio (1485-1557), *Delle navigationi et viaggi*, Venice: Ciunti, 1559, Volume II

Marco Polo's *Travels* (published as the *Divisament dou monde*, and penned by Rustichello of Pisa), detail over two decades of journeys (1271-1295) through the Mongol Empire undertaken by this Venetian merchant. Marco's work is encyclopedic in nature, providing details about the natural environment, the cultures he encountered, and the histories of many of these people. The *Travels* states that its purpose is to inform its readers of the "different generations of men and the diversities of the different regions and lands of the world" and asserts that the greatest marvels were to be found in the East. Marco Polo, like other travellers of his era, frequently attests to the veracity of what he encountered on his journey - but rarely offers any judgment or interpretation.

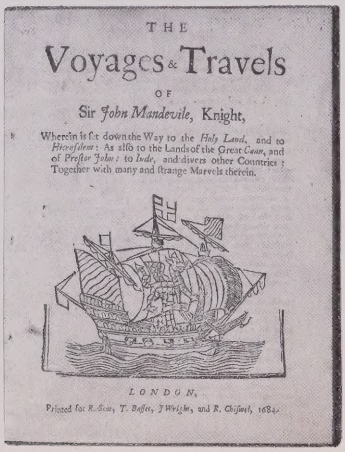
This work was popular in the Middle Age and the Renaissance, although more recently scholars have questioned whether or not Marco Polo actually set foot in all the lands he described in his *Travels*. This version of his text (Figure 5), published in Italian, is taken from Giovanni Battista Ramusio's (1485-1557) three volume work, *Delle navigationi et viaggi*, a compilation of many of the most important expeditions from the Old World, including the voyages of Marco Polo and Peter Martyr, and those from the New, including those of Columbus, Vasco da Gama, Oviedo and Cartier. In the sixteenth century, this collection did much to spark popular interest in contemporary exploration by Europeans.

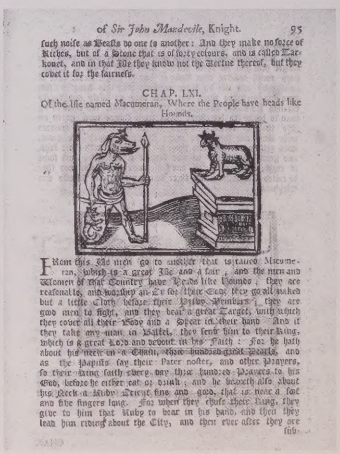
OPENING TO WILLIAM OF RUBRUCK'S (ca. 1210- ca.1270), *Itinerarium*, reprinted in Richard Hakluyt, *The principal navigations, voiages, traffiques and discoueries of the English nation*, London: George Bishop, Ralph Newberrie and Robert Barker, 1598, Volume I

Like Marco Polo, William of Rubruck also journeyed through the Mongol Empire in the thirteenth century (1253-1255). His account is very different from that of the merchant Marco Polo, for Rubruck, a Franciscan missionary, provides an account of the journey he undertook in the service of the King of France, Louis IX, during the Seventh Crusade. Rubruck recounts his journey from beginning to end, describing the physical and political geography of the East, but steering clear of tales of marvels. He informs the reader that he had inquired about the "freaks and monsters" mentioned by both Solinus and Isidore of Seville, but did not encounter them at first hand, causing him to doubt their existence. Rubruck chooses to speak in his own voice and includes his personal thoughts and feelings, providing for the first time a sense of what it must have really been like to travel through the East at this time. Although hailed by modern commentators as a beautiful and intelligent piece of travel writing, Rubruck's account fell into oblivion shortly after it was written (only five copies of his manuscript are known). His non polemical observations and matter-of-fact tone did little to excite wonder - an approach that was perhaps unappealing to late medieval readers. His work was resurrected and republished by Richard Hakluyt (1552?-1616) in the sixteenth century, and again in the seventeenth century by Samuel Purchas.

TITLE PAGE AND IMAGE OF CYNOCEPHALI (Dog-Heads) from Sir John Mandeville, *The voyages and travels of Sir John Mandeville*, London: R. Scot, 1684

Although Marco Polo's name is perhaps more familiar to a modern-day audience, it was the work of John Mandeville that enjoyed immense and continuing popularity. Originally composed in Anglo-Norman French, it was translated into every major


THE
Voyages & Travels
OF
Sir *John Mandevile*, Knight,
Wherein is set down the Way to the *Holy Land*, and to *Hierusalem*: As also to the Lands of the Great *Cham*, and of *Prester John*: to *India*, and divers other Countries: Together with many and strange Marvels therein.
LONDON,
Printed for *R. Scot*, *T. Basset*, *J. Wright*, and *R. Chiswell*, 1684.


of *Sir John Mandevile*, Knight. 95
such noise as Beasts do one to another: And they make no store of Riches, but of a Stone that is of sory colours, and is called Marchonet, and in that Ile they know not the Value thereof, but they count it for the fairnes.
CHAP. LXI.
Of the Ile named Macumeran, Where the People have heads like Hounds.
From this Ile men go to another that is named Macumeran, which is a great Ile and a fair, and the men and Women of that Country have Heads like Hounds; they are reasonable, and worship as Lords their Gods: they go all naked but a little Cloth before them: In Battel Armours: they are good men to fight, and they bear a great Target, with which they cover all their Body and a Sperr in their hand: And if they take any man in Battel, they send him to their King, which is a great Lord and worst in his Faith: For he hath about him there in the Court, three hundred great Prests, and as the Papists say their Pater noster, and other Prayers, so there they say their Orisons by their Fingers: So he that can, before he either eat or drink, and he knoweth also about the Clock a Hour: Neither fine and good, that is not a Span and five fingers long. So when they chuse their King, they give to him that Rod to bear in his hand, and then they lead him riding about the City, and then ever after they are sub-

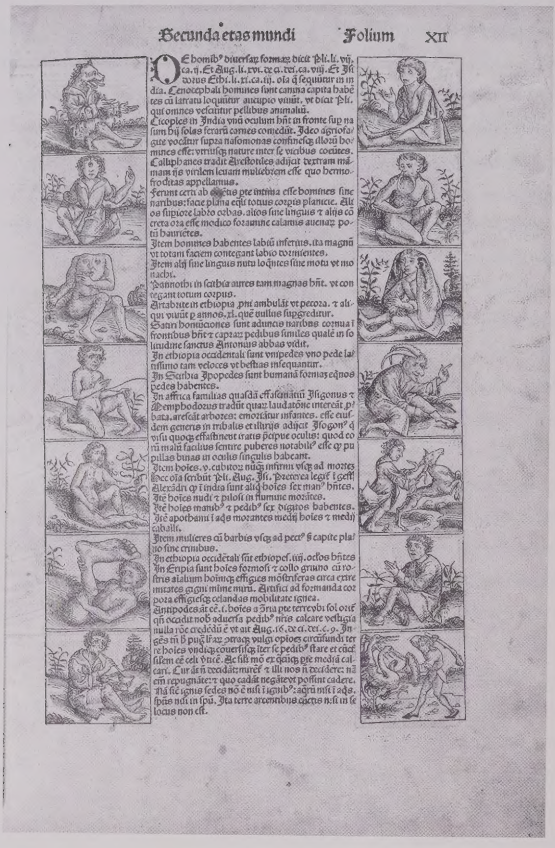
European language by 1500 and survives today in over 300 manuscripts (compared to 80 copies of Marco Polo's *Travels*). The author of this work guides the reader through much of the East, including Jerusalem, Turkey, Persia, Egypt and India, recounting tales of his journeys. It has been suggested that the author's name, "John Mandeville," is a pseudonym, that he was not, as he asserts, an Englishman, and that his claim to have travelled in the east (between 1322 and 1356) is false. The *Travels* is rather a compilation of a variety of sources, including classical accounts, the Bible, travel literature, historical texts, medieval encyclopedias, and geographical treatises. In spite of (or perhaps because of) the work's fictional nature, the *Travels* remained extremely popular through the Renaissance and into the eighteenth century.

The second image comes from the same late seventeenth-century illustrated edition of Mandeville's *Travels*. It depicts a scene commonly found in versions of this work - that of a cynocephalus (dog-head) worshipping an idol. The cynocephali, thought to inhabit the East, were frequently found in wonder books, depicted on maps, and sculpted in tympana of churches across Europe, and became one of the most commonly represented monstrous races. Frequently cast as idolaters, they were often associated with Saracens, Jews and other non-Christians. Many travel accounts reveal a particular disgust for this practice of idolatry (for example Odoric of Pordenone), whereas others such as Mandeville and Marco Polo make mention of it but reserve judgment. In any case, the perceived presence of cynocephali in the East helped to encourage missionary efforts to Christianize this part of the world from the thirteenth century on.

MONSTROUS RACES FROM HARTMANN SCHEDEL (1440-1514), *Liber chronicarum*, Nuremberg: Anton Koberger, 1493

Compiled by Hartmann Schedel, the *Liber chronicarum*, or *Nuremberg Chronicle*, as it is most commonly named, is a pictorial history of the world from creation to the year 1493. It contains over 1800 prints taken from the woodcuts of Michael Wolgemuth and William Pleydenwurff. Depicted here is a selection of fourteen monstrous races, including a Cynocephalus (dog-head), a Cyclops, a Blemmyae (with his face on his chest), an Abarimon (with backward-turned feet), an Amazon, a Sciopod (with one large foot to shade him from the sun), a Sciritae (noseless), an Amyctyrae (with an enlarged lower lip that could serve as an umbrella), and a Panotii (with oversized ears that could be used as wings). By the twelfth century, visual representations of this sort had become increasingly common. They feature prominently in medieval bestiaries where they serve a didactic purpose, each being accompanied by a Christian moralization. They also make their appearance in medieval and Renaissance travel accounts and on mappaemundi (including the Hereford map, where the majority are situated to the right of the Nile).

The origins of the monstrous races can be traced back to numerous classical sources. They are best known through the account given by Pliny in his *Natural History* (77 A.D.) which became the authoritative source on this subject for later works such as Solinus' *Collectanea rerum memorabilium* (3rd century A.D.), Bartholomaeus Anglicus'


Secunda etas mundi Folium XII

De homib⁹ diuersis formis dicit Plī.li. vij. ca. ij. Et Aug. li. xvi. de ci. dei. ca. viij. Et Jsidorus Ethi. li. xi. ca. iij. ola q̄ sequūtur in india. Cenocephali homines sunt canina capita habētes cū latratu loquūtur aucupio viuūt. vt dicit Plī. qui omnes vestiūtur pellibus animaliū.
Cicopes in India vnū oculum hīt in fronte sup nasum hȳ solas ferarū cornes comedūt. Ideo agriofagi vocāt supra nasum eorū confinctū illorū hominum esse: vtrūq; nature inter se ferocissimos coitus.
Calliphanes tradit circa fontes adijcit tertiam mānam ejs virilem ieiuam mulierem esse quo dermofrodytas appellamus.
Ferunt cerā ab oriēte pte inmitia esse hominū fine naribus: facie plana cui totum corpus planicie. Alios supiore labio octuo. alios sine linguis q aliqs cōcrea ora esse medijs foraminis calamis auenaq; potū haurientes.
Item homines habentes labiū inferius. ita magnū vt totam faciem contegant labio dormientes.
Item alij sine linguis nutu loquntes sine motu vt mo tu ore.
Pannotij in scithia aures tam magnas hīt. vt contegant totum corpus.
Strabutes in ethiopia pni ambulāt vt pecora. q aliqui viuūt p annos. ri. q̄ nullus fugit reuitur.
Sauri homiciones sunt admus naribus cornua i frontibus hīt. q capiūt pedibus similes quale in simulachro sanctus Antonius abbas vidit.
In ethiopia occidentali sunt vnipedes vno pede lassimo tam veloces vt bestias insequantur.
In Scithia Sciopodes sunt humanā formā eōrū pedes habentes.
In africa familias quasdā effe famianū Jligonus. Sciompodoeus tradit quas laudatione imeritis p̄ bata. arefcāt arbores: emoritur infantes. esse eudem generū in tribalis et illyrio adjcit Jlogon⁹ q vsu quoq; effarinent. ratis picipue oculis: quod eo ni malū facilius sentire puberes notabile esse q pupillas binas in oculo singulis habeant.
Item boues. v. cubitoꝝ nūc infimū vsq; ad montes hec ola scribit Plī. Aug. Jsi. Paterea legit Jgeff Eleziū q̄ India sunt alq̄ boues sex man⁹ hītes.
Jte boues nudi. z pilosi in flumine morātes.
Jte boues manib⁹ z pedib⁹ sex digitos habentes.
Jte apothami i adꝝ moyantes medij boues z medij caballi.
Item mulieres cū barbis vsq; ad pect⁹ & capite plaū sine crinibus.
In ethiopia occidētali sūt ethiopes. nū. oculos hītes
In Europa sunt boues formosi z collo grumo cū rostris aliarum boūm: effigies mōstruosas circa extremitates q̄ mīme mari. Significat formanda corpora effigiesq; celandas mobilitate ignea.
Antipodes sūt cē. i. boies a nra pte terre obi. sol oritur & occidit nob aduersis pedib⁹ nris calcare vestigia nulla rōe credēdū e vt ait Aug. 16. de ci. dei. c. 9. Jnges ni b pugĩat: prauq; vulgi opiones circūfundi terre boies vndiq; couersis ab iter pedib⁹ stare et cāc fisem cē oēi vtrē. Ec sili mō et q̄dā pte medīa calcari. Cur ā eis recedat mare? z illi nos ni deserere nā eim repugnāter: z quo cadāt negāt et possint cadere.
Jtē sē ignis seclos nō e nisi i gnib⁹: aēra nisi i adꝝ. hoīn nūi in spū. Jta terre arcenibus q̄etus nisi in se locus non ē.

De proprietatibus rerum (ca. 1240-1260), Vincent of Beauvais' *Speculum naturale* (ca.1250) and Thomas of Cantimpré's *De natura rerum* (1228-1244). Medieval and Renaissance travel writers also relied on early classical writings, often directly citing Pliny and Solinus as the source for their information. Typically, these sources provide the same type of information about the monstrous races, detailing their unique characteristics and the locations where they can be found. Traditionally, they were located in the East - especially India, Ethiopia, and Libya - along with other fantastical creatures such as the unicorn and phoenix. Although many medieval and Renaissance travellers anticipated encounters with such fabulous beings, rarely do they ever claim to have witnessed them firsthand. Their accounts reveal how difficult it was for medieval travellers to reconcile what they "knew" about the East and what they experienced for themselves. Some reveal a certain scepticism, but rarely do they deny the existence of the monstrous races.

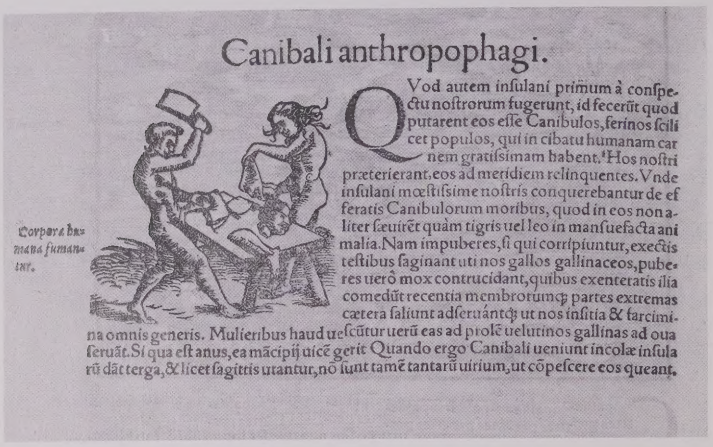
While searching for a more direct passage to the East, Christopher Columbus happened upon the New World in 1492, launching the Age of Discovery. Like the East, the New World was geographically and culturally removed from the familiar lands of Europe. Tales traditionally associated with the East were frequently transposed to these new lands. Early travellers, familiar with the riches of the East, often set out in search of similar sources of wealth here and many also expected to encounter the Old World monstrous races on their journeys. For example, Sir Walter Raleigh (1552?-1618) wrote that the natives had confirmed the presence of blemmyae in Guiana, whereas others claimed to have encountered them first hand, as Amerigo Vespucci (1451-1512) did, reporting that he had uncovered an island of giants. The native North and South Americans, previously unknown to Europeans, were frequently compared to the more familiar fabulous beings and, once again, it was their differences that were most often accentuated.

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS (1446-1506), *La prima lettera di Cristoforo Colombo, annunziate la scoperta dell'America*, Firenze: Giannini, 1932 (facsimile of the 1493 Latin edition)

In 1492, financed by King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain, Christopher Columbus, Genoese by birth, set sail from the Canary Islands. The primary goal of his expedition was a search for a direct trade route to Asia - however, as we all know, he in fact reached the New World, and more precisely, the Caribbean. Given that Europeans had no knowledge of the existence of these lands, it is no surprise that Columbus' early accounts are peppered with references to the East (the Indies, Cathay and the territories of the Great Khan), clearly indicating that he believed he had landed in that part of the world.

This letter, dated February 15, 1493, written shortly before his return to Lisbon and addressed to several Spanish sovereigns, is a mix of official report and propaganda. It attempts to sum up his discoveries and achievements but is couched entirely in positive terms, mentioning nothing of the adversity encountered. He reports on the riches uncovered on his journey and the fertility of the lands (although the islands he visited were not rich and were without valuable spices, resources, or gold). Columbus notes that he did not uncover the monstrous races that the ancients claimed were to be found in the East, but does inform us that cannibalism was practiced on at least one of the islands he visited. He tells us that the natives went about naked, were generally timid and seemed to be impressed by the small gifts he presented them. (While in the New World, Columbus enslaved many of these natives, forcing them to dig for gold, and subsequently returned home with a number of them to serve as Spanish labourers.)

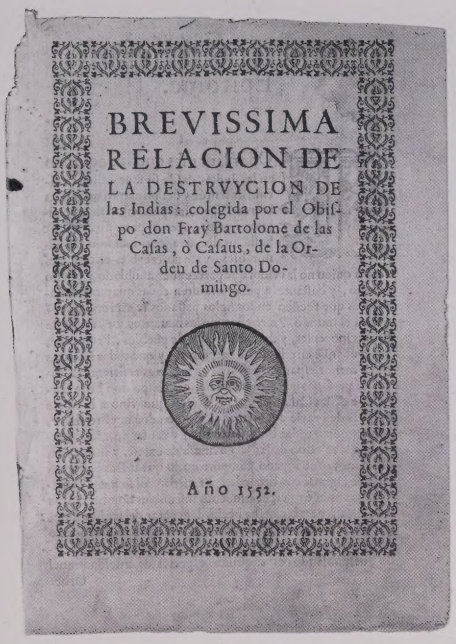
Columbus' letter was first published several months after his return home and circulated in a number of European vernaculars. Although only twenty-two editions were published between 1493 and 1522, his writings helped to shape early European conceptions of the New World.


Canibali anthropophagi.
Corpora humana fumantia.
QVod autem insulani primum à conspectu nostrorum fugerunt, id fecerũt quod putarent eos esse Canibulos, ferinos scilicet populos, qui in cibatu humanam carnem gratissimam habent. Hos nostri præterierant, eos ad meridiem relinquentes. Vnde insulani mœstissime nostris conquerebantur de eferatis Canibulorum moribus, quod in eos non aliter sæuirẽt quàm tigris uel leo in mansuefacta animalia. Nam impuberes, si qui corripiuntur, exectis testibus saginant uti nos gallos gallinaceos, puberes uerò mox contrucidant, quibus exenteratis ilia comedũt recentia membrorumq; partes extremas cætera saliunt adseruántq; ut nos insitia & farcimina omnis generis. Mulieribus haud uescũtur uerũ eas ad prolẽ uelutinos gallinas ad oua seruãt. Si qua est anus, ea mãcipiũ uicẽ gerit. Quando ergo Canibali ueniunt incolæ insulã dãt terga, & licet sagittis utantur, nõ iunt tamẽ tantarũ uirium, ut cõpescere eos queant.

CANABALI ANTHROPOPHAGI FROM SEBASTIAN MÜNSTER (1489-1552), *Cosmographia universalis*, Basileae: Apvd H. Tetrh., 1559

Early accounts of New World encounters were often paradoxical, depicting the territory as an earthly paradise, but its peoples as at once savage and amenable. As travel to this part of the world increased, the differences to be found there were observed in increasing detail. Terms like "cannibal", "barbarian" and "uncivilized" often appear in the literature. Social and cultural differences were also noted, as writers commented on the nakedness of the natives, their lack of civil and legal organization, and their peculiar religions, their uncivilized manner and their lascivious nature. Many of these descriptions were adapted from earlier accounts of travel in the exotic East, and the strange races found there.

This image from Sebastian Münster's *Cosmographia universalis* casts New World natives as man-eating cannibals, highlighting their barbaric nature and eliciting horror and disgust from European viewers. They are also depicted here in the role of cynocephali, symbolizing both their monstrosity and their potential to be converted. Münster's text was not the only one to portray New World natives in this manner, for various editions of Amerigo Vespucci's travels include similar images, while Martin Frobisher's late sixteenth-century account discusses the cannibalistic tendencies of the New World populations.



TITLE PAGE FROM BARTOLOMÉ DE LAS CASAS (1474-1566), *Brevissima relacion de la destrvycion de las Indias*, Barcelona: A. Lacavalleria, 1646

A Franciscan missionary, Bartolomé de las Casas travelled to the New World at the age of twenty-seven where he was ordained as a priest in 1510. He spent most of his adult life serving as a chaplain. It is, however, for his work as an advocate for the native population for which he is best known. This influential work shown here, *Brevissima relacion de la destrvycion de las Indias* (*A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*), was first published in 1552 and was the only one of Las Casas' writings to appear during his lifetime. In it, Las Casas reports on the religious, social, and political structure of the New World native inhabitants. He encourages Europeans to experience the Americas for themselves at first hand, stating that only through personal experience can one know the truth about these lands and their inhabitants.

In an unusual departure from the usual rhetoric of colonization and conquest, Las Casas speaks out, loudly, against the tyrannical practices employed by the Europeans against the natives. He insists that the Americas were not simply conquered virgin territory, but rather had been forcibly invaded. He argues for the property and political rights of the natives and for recognition of their human status, insisting that they are equal to Europeans. Las Casas' humanitarian views made him very unpopular, particularly among settlers.

With the discovery of the New World, cartographers began to re-work their world maps to reflect the new information they received from explorers. Shown here are four maps, spanning a period of forty years, that demonstrate the shifts in the geographical picture. Changes in the depictions of North and South America are particularly noteworthy.

The first, taken from Peter Apian's *Cosmographia* incorporates Macrobius' climatic zones but also depicts South America (labelled as "America"), indicates the location of Peru, and notes the presence of cannibals in the north-east. At this date, it is clear that the mapping of North America was still at its very early stages, for the continent is represented here as a thin strip of land.

The second, a hand-coloured world map from Abraham Ortelius' *Theatrum orbis terrarum*, was first published in 1570 and was subsequently reprinted in numerous editions across Europe. This edition from 1584 includes maps found in the first printing, engraved on copper by Franz Hogenberg (1558-1590).

Taken from his best known work, *Relationi universali* (begun in 1591), Giovanni Botero's map of America is one of a series depicting all of the continents. Botero's map, produced almost one hundred years after Columbus' first voyage, depicts an early and ever-changing conception of this portion of the world.

The final map presents another view of the world, taken from Gerhard Mercator's collection of maps, published posthumously as the *Atlas sive Cosmographicae*. This volume, shown here in an edition from 1602, was the first to use the word "atlas" to refer to a collection of maps. Mercator, frequently referred to as the greatest cartographer since Ptolemy, was also a calligrapher, a maker of scientific instruments and an engraver. Although trained for the priesthood, Mercator turned to the study of cartography under the tutelage of fellow mapmaker, Gemma Frisius. He produced his first world map in 1538 but did not publish another for thirty years. In the interim he studied geographical literature, travel narratives and the techniques of navigation as he planned and prepared his revolutionary world map. His maps reflect a detailed understanding of the work of his predecessors and show a concern for continuity. Furthermore, they were conceived as intellectual documents to be read and studied and, to this end, included lengthy commentaries on diverse subjects.

Mercator is recognized not only for the extensive number of maps he produced, but also for the development of a cartographical system of projection (*Mercator's Projection*) intended to simplify navigational practices. His system, although not adopted by his contemporaries, has been in use from the seventeenth century to the present day.

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